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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BASRAH 000025

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SUBJECT: BASRAH SHEIK'S SUCCESS CONFRONTING JAM

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CLASSIFIED BY: Howell Howard, Regional Coordinator, Regional
Embassy Office Basrah, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (d)

11. (S/Rel MNFI) SUMMARY and Comment: Sheik Mansur (Beni-Tamim) told REO March 28 of tribal success in securing the Shat-al-Arab sector of Basrah City; he asked the Minister of Interior for permission to field 500 tribesmen from a coalition of 12 tribes to secure his area, as well as help in removing known IED emplacements. Mansur charged that Iranian IRCG elements have heavily infiltrated the city with sophisticated new generations of RPGs and mortars. Food and water shortages are critical but he claimed the populace in his area still support ISF attempts to secure the city; he stressed that U.S. and British troops would be welcomed. Many of Governor Wa'eli's Fadhila members were siding with OMS/JAM insurgents. While critical of General Mohan's tactics, Mansur said that the current battle had to be fought to its finish or the Iranians would win Basrah. Comment: Coalition assistance with disarming IEDs might be a positive, non-combat role to help win hearts and minds. END SUMMARY and Comment.

12. In a late night telecom on March 28, Sheik Mansur Al-Kan'aw of the Beni-Tamim tribe related to REO how he secured the Shat-al-Arab section of Basra City for the GOI. On the first day of the Iraqi Army offensive, JAM fighters overran the Shat-al-Arab police station. Mansur organized that day a meeting of tribes with members in the area to discuss how to counter the JAM threat. The Sheiks supported direct action, as there was no effective ISF to counter the station takeover. Mansur, with members of his tribe visited the local JAM office and threatened JAM with a full on attack if they did not vacate the station. Mansur recovered 200 AK-47s that JAM had seized from the police (who fled), along with 4 police vehicles. Also recovered were the "Janseeah" [sic] population records that Mansur claimed JAM was starting to burn, presumably to destroy potential voter rolls. Mansur said that the weapons and vehicles have remained in his compound. Tribal members secured the station for IA forces.

13. (S/Rel MNFI) Mansur held a morning meeting the next day with the 11 sheiks and they determined to sort out their respective tribes' participation in JAM forces. At an evening meeting the group reported that an aggregate of 700 of 1000 JAM fighters that had tribal affiliations had deserted JAM forces. Mansur related that PM Maliki called Mansur to thank him for his efforts. Mansur went a step further and offered a list of 500 tribesmen that could be used as a local guard force to secure this part of the city; the Minister of Interior replied that he would give an answer on March 29.

14. (S/Rel MNFI) The Sheiks and tribal affiliations with whom Mansur met and executed his plan were: Lazem, of Al-Hathaf;

Dayaa, of Al-Aydan; Abu Wathik, of Al- Thayamer; Armash, of Albu Saleh; and seven others.

15. (S/Rel MNFI) Food, medicine and especially water shortages were critical in his area, Mansur warned. The curfew was still in effect on the one hand, and on the other JAM had emplaced IEDs around the Al Tannumah bridge and the populace were scared to cross. Mansur claimed that in his area there were 300 IEDs emplaced in locations that his people had identified; he asked the Minister of Interior for EOD assistance to remove them, offering tribal members as a guard force to secure the area.

16. (S/Rel MNFI) Mansur lamented that Iranians were tipping the scales in favor of OMS/JAM. He said ICRG agents had fanned out across the city to support JAM special groups. In his area hundreds of IEDs and other weapons were flooding in from Iran. Mansur asserted a change in weaponry: now rockets were aimed using laptop computers. JAM was employing new model RPG7s that were armor piercing, and there was a new (to Basrah) mortar larger than 120mm. Basrah Provincial Council member Said Basim Al-Mouswi (Iraqi Hizbollah), Mansur claimed, was funneling Iranian weapons and resources to JAM.

17. (S/Rel MNFI) REO Director asked Mansur if he thought Governor Wa'eli and the Fadhila party could play a role in bringing OMS/JAM elements to the table to negotiate a solution. After noting that Wa'eli was more concerned with smuggling oil than helping, Mansur went on to say that a number of Fadhila members were fighting with JAM against the IA; as an example he said that in his Shat-al-Arab sector two Iraqi Police officers and 40 policemen, all Fadhila, had joined the fight against the IA. Mansur acknowledged that Wa'eli had contacts with OMS and could facilitate bringing them to the table, but what was the point? OMS demands were clear and not something the GOI could agree to anymore: to remain free from arrest and to retain their weapons.

18. (S/Rel MNFI) Mansur pleaded for the intervention of Coalition forces on the ground and in the air. As for the

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current ISF operational plan, it was not going well, he said, but there was no recourse other than to forge ahead. Mansur admitted that the timing of PM Maliki's offensive was wrong but a defeat now would mean "the Iranians had won." The Sheik said, claiming to draw on his own experience as an army officer, that BOC Commander General Mohan's tactics showed his inexperience as a field commander; Mohan was not employing blocking forces, rather he simply sent his troops in for frontal assaults.

19. (S/Rel MNFI) Mansur said that U.S. and British ground forces would be welcomed in most parts of the city (except for some historic JAM strongholds such as Al- Hyyaniyah) and definitely in his area. While the reputation of British troops had suffered over the past months from perceived inaction, he opined that a British troop presence now would help them regain their reputation. When REO director noted that Coalition forces were providing a supporting role, Mansur answered "may God increase their numbers." (Note: in a separate conversation with Police Chief Jalil, the general almost shouted that if U.S. troops did not intervene in a matter of days, the city would be lost. End Note.)

110. (C/Rel MNFI) Bio note: Sheik Mansur was an officer in Saddam's army and has been a good contact of the REO and MND-SE/FCO. He is a wealthy man with extensive farms who has largely stayed out of Basrah politics but, like many tribal sheiks with substantial populations, he knows all of the political actors.

111. (S/Rel MNFI) COMMENT: Mansur is a credible contact, and other contacts have confirmed his decisive intervention in a key part of the city abutting Basrah's central water bridge. Helping remove IED's from one of the few relative secure parts of the city could further win hearts and minds and show other members of the population the rewards for working with the ISF. As it is unlikely that the ISF can deliver with EOD operations,

this might be an area that Coalition forces could make a visible and positive impact without combat operations. Despite Coalition concerns about tribal security forces in the South, Mansur's offer to guard his area in an organized way merits consideration in these exigent circumstances.

HOWARD